

Essays and Contributions.

OUR BOND OF UNION.

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Excepting, perhaps a few abnormal and excentric characters, man has, since the infancy of his kind, shrank from isolation. Entering upon the active duties of his existence, he selects a partner to share his labors, his joys, his successes and his sorrows, and without such alliance, his life is but half a success at best. He furthermore associates himself with his fellows, in founding villages, towns, cities, or communities; and under such surroundings, seeks to build for himself and his posterity, a home. He seeks congenial environment, and is loth to depart from the pleasure it affords him. However, in the selection of a partner, and of an abiding place among his fellowmen, he is, or ought to be, governed by congeniality of taste, by oneness of purpose, that the relations entered upon, may be profitable and indissoluble. There must be, and there is, a bond which unites those working together. It may be that a single idea, or a single desire constitutes the tie, in which event such union is the more easily broken. But whatever, and how-much-so-ever it may be, man recognizes the need of it and his soul craves it, and starves at its being withheld.

We have been so accustomed to hear the adage "In union there is strength" until it seems we never learned it, but must always have known it. There may, however, be applications of the proverb, with which we may not be so well acquainted as we are with the proverb itself. Especially as it may be applied to the church, can it be said, we are well nigh strangers to its true meaning. And yet the thought must often have occurred to us, that with concentrated action, among all of the so called believers in Christ, the world must speedily be brought to His feet. There is, however, little use to pine and sorrow over the fact that there is no such condition among them, since it is also true that if we, a little band of Brethren would act in concert, the desired end would be attained much sooner than it will be under present

conditions. I do not mean by this that none love God, for I know there are many who do so, but not *too* many who love Him as he wants to be loved, —as shown by a full obedience to His word. A small number of men and women, unitedly working to the same end, surprise us by their achievements and a small denomination, such as we are, may yet, by united and consecrated effort plant the banner of salvation, upon the very ramparts of sin and death.

How each individual heart yearns for success as has just been cited as among the possibilities. The pulpit resounds with voice attuned to this purpose. The people pray—"Thy kingdom come" and we all respond "amen." One well-nigh insurmountable obstacle stands between us and the point we desire to reach; it is, that while we desire very much that the necessary condition shall be brought about, it shall come as *we* want it. Our ideas are to be the basis of union. We must wish more deeply. All of self must be eliminated from our desires, ere the coveted goal shall be reached.

The unanimity we so much desire, and that should make our cause a power for good among the children of men, shall come only as the result of our having a *common platform*. I do not mean by this, that in *all* things we must be agreed, for such a state is hardly to be expected, but that upon *basic principles* our faith must be a common one. In our Conferences we have foolishly avoided making an authoritative announcement, as to what we consider as basic principles, farther than they are gospel, and that all things therein are equally binding, which is all right so far as it goes, but is surely quite abstract, and incomprehensible to not a few. I shall, however be safe in saying that they are, (1) Faith, (2) Repentance, (3) Baptism by a true immersion, administered to believers, in Christ, for the remission of sins. (4) Feet washing, (5) the Lord's Supper and communion, (6) the salutation of the holy kiss, (7) The anointing of the sick; non-resistance, and non-swearing have also a place, as has every other command of the New Testament scriptures. Those named above are cardinal, and are unto us, our "One

Lord, one faith, one baptism." Eph. 4:5, and these constitute our bond of union. If indeed this is true, it must be plain that the more closely we adhere to them, and to the Book which teaches them, the more pronounced will be our union, and the greater our power for good. These distinctive planks of our platform, if I may so speak of them, are authoritative in their origin, and as immutable as the Rock of Ages. Why then should we weaken in their propagation, or in their defense? It is sometimes argued that we must avoid giving offense to the supersensitive, and must therefore go slow in declaring the whole truth, or in defending it. It is a question to be settled by us whether "We ought to obey God rather than men." Acts 5:29. The gospel either does, or does not teach, that trine immersion is Christian baptism, and if it decides in favor of that mode, then nothing else can satisfy its demand. If it is the expressed idea of the scripture, then it is the will of God; and if it is God's will, it is only ours to render obedience. I shall not be able within the limits of this paper to argue the matter at any length, but let it be remembered that all the authority any one has for either preaching or baptizing, is to be found in a single paragraph.—Matt 28: 19. The historical and epistolary parts of the Word, are but the outgrowths of this commission. And let it be further remembered, that this authority defines briefly, yet clearly and pointedly, the mode by which baptism shall be administered,—*"Into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."* I fear we are not as aggressive upon these points, as their importance would warrant us in being. I have even known of instances in which a spirit of compromise was manifested. I cannot conceive how that a proper degree of devotion to our motto—"The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible." could yield any point of its teachings to compromise. He, who gave unto us, and unto all, His law, and His life, was ever kind, loving and full of charity, but was unyielding and uncompromising throughout. And we who would be disciples, can best show our discipleship by following His example, for "the servant is not above